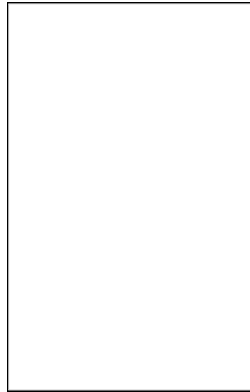


The Path to Peace



*There are two kinds of peacefulness :
one is the peace that comes through **samādhi**,
the other is the peace that comes through **paññā**.
The mind that is **peaceful through samādhi is still deluded**.
The peace that comes through the practice of samādhi
alone is dependent on the mind being separated from mind-
objects.*

by Luang Por Chah

Silā, samādhi and paññā are the names given to the different aspects of the practice. When you practise silā, samādhi and paññā, it means you practise with yourselves. Right silā exists here, right samādhi exists here. Why? Because your body is right here! You have hands, you have legs right here. This is where you practise silā. It's easy to reel off the list of wrong kinds of behaviour as found in the books, but the important thing to understand is that the potential for them all lies within us. Your body and speech are with you right here and now. You practise moral restraint, which means taking care to avoid the unskilful actions of killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. For instance, in the past you may have killed animals or insects by smashing them with an axe or a fist, or perhaps you didn't take much care with your speech: false speech means lying or exaggerating the truth; coarse speech means you are constantly being abusive or rude to others - 'you scum,' 'you idiot,' and so on; frivolous speech means aimless chatter, foolishly rambling on without purpose or substance. We've indulged in it all. No restraint! In short, keeping silā means watching over yourself, watching over your actions and speech.

So who will do the watching over? Who will take responsibility for your actions? Who is the one who knows before you lie, swear or say something frivolous? Contemplate this: whoever it is who knows is the one who has to take responsibility for your silā. Bring that awareness to watch over your actions and speech. That knowing, that awareness is what you use to watch over your practice. To keep silā, you use that part of the mind which directs your actions and which leads you to do good and bad. You catch the villain and transform him into a sheriff or a mayor. Take hold of the wayward mind and bring it to serve and take responsibility for all your actions and speech. Look at this and contemplate it. The Buddha taught us to take care with our actions. Who is it who does the taking care?

The practice involves establishing sati, mindfulness, within this 'one who knows.' The 'one who knows' is that intention of mind which previously motivated us to kill living beings, steal other people's property, indulge in illicit sex, lie, slander, say foolish and frivolous things and engage in all the kinds of unrestrained behaviour. The 'one who knows' led us to speak. It exists within the mind. Focus your mindfulness (sati) - that constant recollectedness - on this 'one who knows.' Let the knowing look after your practice. Use sati or awareness to keep the mind recollecting in the present moment and maintain mental composure in this way. Make the mind look after itself. Do it well.

If the mind is really able to look after itself, it is not so difficult to guard speech and actions, since they are all supervised by the mind. Keeping silâ - in other words taking care of your actions and speech - is not such a difficult thing. You sustain awareness at every moment and in every posture, whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down. Before you perform any action, speak or engage in conversation, establish awareness first. You must have sati, be recollecting, before you do anything. It doesn't matter what you are going to say, you must first be recollecting in the mind. Practise like this until you are fluent. Practise so that you can keep abreast of what's going on in the mind; to the point where mindfulness becomes effortless and you are mindful before you act, mindful before you speak. This is the way you establish mindfulness in the heart. It is with the 'one who knows' that you look after yourself, because all your actions spring from here. By guarding your speech and actions they become graceful and pleasing to the eye and ear, while you yourself remain comfortable and at ease within the restraint. If you practise mindfulness and restraint until it becomes comfortable and natural to you, the mind will become firm and resolute in the practice of silâ and restraint. It will be consistently paying attention to the practice and thus become concentrated. The characteristic of being unwavering in the practice of mindfulness and restraint is called 'samâdhi.' The mind is firmly concentrated in this practice of silâ and restraint. Being firmly concentrated in the practice of silâ means that there is an evenness and consistency to the practice of mindfulness and restraint. These are the characteristics of samâdhi as an external factor in the practice. However, it also has an inner, deeper side to it.

Once the mind has an intentness in the practice and silâ and samâdhi are firmly established, you will be able to investigate and reflect on that which is wholesome and unwholesome - asking yourself "Is this right?..." "Is that wrong?" as you experience different mind-objects. When the mind makes contact with different sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations or ideas, the 'one who knows' will arise and establish awareness of liking and disliking, happiness and suffering and the different kinds of mind-objects that you experience. You will come to see clearly, and see many different things. If you are mindful, you will see the different objects which pass into the mind and the reaction which takes place upon experiencing them. The 'one who knows' will automatically take them up as objects for contemplation. Once the mind is vigilant and mindfulness is firmly established, you will note all the reactions displayed through either body, speech or mind, as mind-objects are experienced. That aspect of the mind which identifies and selects the good from the bad, the right from the wrong, from amongst all the mind-objects within your field of awareness, is paññâ. This is paññâ in its initial stages and it matures as a result of the practice. All these different aspects of the practice arise from within the mind. The Buddha referred to these characteristics as silâ, samâdhi and paññâ. As you continue the practice, fresh attachments and new kinds of delusion begin to arise in the mind.

This means you start clinging to that which is good or wholesome. You become fearful of any blemishes or faults in the mind - anxious that your samâdhi will be harmed by them. At the same time you begin to be diligent and hard working, and to love and nurture the practice. You continue to practise like this as much as possible, until you might even reach the point where you are constantly judging and picking fault with everyone you meet, wherever you go. You are constantly reacting with attraction and aversion to the world around you, becoming full of all kinds of uncertainty and continually attaching to views of the right and wrong way to practise. It's as if you have become obsessed with the practice. But you don't have to worry about this yet - at that point it's better to practise too much than too little. Practise a lot and dedicate yourself to looking after body, speech and mind. You can never really do too much of this. The practice of mindfulness and restraint with body, speech and mind and the consistent distinguishing between right and wrong is what you hold as the object of mind. You become concentrated in this way and by firmly and unshakably attaching to this way of practice, it means the mind actually becomes silâ, samâdhi and paññâ - the characteristics of the practice as described in the conventional teachings.

As you continue to develop and maintain the practice, these different characteristics and qualities are perfected together in the mind. However, practising silâ, samâdhi and paññâ at this level is still not enough to produce the factors of jhâna (meditative absorption) - the practice is still too coarse. Still, the mind is already quite refined - on the refined side of coarse! For an ordinary unenlightened person who has not been looking after the mind or practised much meditation and mindfulness, just this much is already something quite refined. At this level, you can feel a sense of satisfaction with being able to practise to the full extent of your ability. This is something you will see for yourself; it's something that has to be experienced within the mind of the practitioner.

If this is so, it means that you are already on the path, i.e. practising silâ, samâdhi and paññâ. These must be practised together, for if any are lacking, the practice will not develop correctly. The more your silâ improves, the firmer the mind becomes. The firmer the mind is, the bolder paññâ becomes and so on ... each part of the practice supporting and enhancing all the others. As you deepen and refine the practice, silâ, samâdhi and paññâ will mature together from the same place - they are refined down from the same raw material. In other words the Path has coarse beginnings, but, as a result of training and refining the mind through meditation and reflection, it becomes increasingly subtle. As the mind becomes more refined, the practice of mindfulness becomes more focussed, being concentrated on a more and more narrow area. The practice actually becomes easier as the mind turns more and more inwards to focus on itself. You no longer make big mistakes or go wildly wrong. Now, whenever the mind is affected by a particular matter, doubts will arise - such as whether acting or speaking in a certain way is right or wrong - you simply keep halting the mental proliferation and, through intensifying effort in the practice, continue turning your attention deeper and deeper inside. The practice of samâdhi will become progressively firmer and more concentrated. The practice of paññâ is enhanced so that you can see things more clearly and with increasing ease.

The end result is that you are clearly able to see the mind and its objects, without having to make any distinction between the mind, body or speech. As you continue to turn attention inwards and reflect on the Dhamma, the wisdom faculty gradually matures, and eventually you are left contemplating the mind and mind-objects, which means that you start to

gradually matures, and eventually you are left contemplating the mind and mind-objects - which means that you start to experience the body as immaterial. Through your insight, you are no longer groping at or uncertain in your understanding of the body and the way it is. The mind experiences the body's physical characteristics as formless objects which come into contact with the mind. Ultimately, you are contemplating just the mind and mind-objects - those objects which come into your consciousness. Now, examining the true nature of the mind, you can observe that in its natural state, it has no preoccupations or issues prevailing upon it. It's like a piece of cloth or a flag that has been tied to the end of a pole. As long as it's on its own and undisturbed, nothing will happen to it.

In its natural state, the mind is the same - in it, there exists no loving or hating, nor does it seek to blame other people. It is independent, existing in a state of purity that is truly clear, radiant and untarnished. In its pure state, the mind is peaceful, without happiness or suffering - indeed, not experiencing any *vedanā* (feeling) at all. This is the true state of the mind. The purpose of the practice, then, is to seek inwardly, searching and investigating until you reach the original mind. The original mind is also known as the pure mind. The pure mind is the mind without attachment. It doesn't get affected by mind-objects. In other words, it doesn't chase after the different kinds of pleasant and unpleasant mind-objects. Rather, the mind is in a state of continuous knowing and wakefulness - thoroughly mindful of all it is experiencing. When the mind is like this, no pleasant or unpleasant mind-objects it experiences will be able to disturb it. The mind doesn't 'become' anything. In other words, nothing can shake it. The mind knows itself as pure. It has evolved its own, true independence; it has reached its original state. How is it able to bring this original state into existence? Through the faculty of mindfulness wisely reflecting and seeing that all things are merely conditions arising out of the influence of elements, without any individual being controlling them. This is how it is with the happiness and suffering we experience. When these mental states arise, they are just 'happiness' and 'suffering'. There is no owner of the happiness. The mind is not the owner of the suffering - mental states do not belong to the mind. Look at it for yourself. In reality these are not affairs of the mind, they are separate and distinct. Happiness is just the state of happiness; suffering is just the state of suffering. You are merely the knower of these. In the past, because the roots of greed, hatred and delusion already existed in the mind, whenever you caught sight of the slightest pleasant or unpleasant mind-object, the mind would react immediately - you would take hold of it and have to experience either happiness or suffering. You would be continuously indulging in states of happiness and suffering. That's the way it is as long as the mind doesn't know itself - as long as it's not bright and illuminated. The mind is not free. It is influenced by whatever mind-objects it experiences. In other words, it is without a refuge, unable to truly depend on itself. You receive a pleasant mental impression and get into a good mood. The mind forgets itself.

In contrast, the original mind is beyond good and bad. This is the original nature of the mind. If you feel happy over experiencing a pleasant mind-object, that is delusion. If you feel unhappy over experiencing an unpleasant mind-object, that is delusion. Unpleasant mind objects make you suffer and pleasant ones make you happy - this is the world. Mind-objects come with the world. They are the world. They give rise to happiness and suffering, good and evil, and everything that is subject to impermanence and uncertainty. When you separate from the original mind, everything becomes uncertain - there is just unending birth and death, uncertainty and apprehensiveness, suffering and hardship, without any way of halting it or bringing it to cessation. This is the endless round of rebirth.

Samādhi means the mind that is firmly concentrated, and the more you practise the firmer the mind becomes. The more firmly the mind is concentrated, the more resolute in the practice it becomes. The more you contemplate, the more confident you become. The mind becomes truly stable - to the point where it can't be swayed by anything at all. You are absolutely confident that no single mind-object has the power to shake it. Mind-objects are mind-objects; the mind is the mind. The mind experiences good and bad mental states, happiness and suffering, because it is deluded by mind-objects. If it isn't deluded by mind-objects, there's no suffering. The undeluded mind can't be shaken. Simply speaking, this state that has arisen is the mind itself. If you contemplate according to the truth of the way things are, you can see that there exists just one path and it is your duty to follow it. If you attach to happiness, you are off the path - because attaching to happiness will cause suffering to arise. If you attach to sadness, it can be a cause for suffering to arise. You understand this - you are already mindful with right view - but at the same time, are not yet able to fully let go of your attachments.

So what is the correct way to practice? You must walk the middle path, which means keeping track of the various mental states of happiness and suffering, while at the same time keeping them at a distance, off to either side of you.

This is the correct way to practise - you maintain mindfulness and awareness even though you are still unable to let go. It's the correct way, because whenever the mind attaches to states of happiness and suffering, awareness of the attachment is always there. This means that whenever the mind attaches to states of happiness, you don't praise it or give value to it, and whenever it attaches to states of suffering, you don't criticise it. This way you can actually observe the mind as it is. Happiness is not right, suffering is not right. There is the understanding that neither of these is the right path. You are unable to drop them, but you can be mindful of them. With mindfulness established, you don't give undue value to happiness or suffering. You don't give importance to either of those two directions which the mind can take, and you hold no doubts about this; you know that following either of those ways is not the right path of practice, so at all times you take this middle way of equanimity as the object of mind. When you practise to the point where the mind goes beyond happiness and suffering, equanimity will necessarily arise as the path to follow, and you have to gradually move down it, little by little - the heart knowing the way to go to be beyond defilements, but, not yet being ready to finally transcend them, it withdraws and continues practising.

Whenever happiness arises and the mind attaches, you have to take that happiness up for contemplation, and whenever it attaches to suffering, you have to take that up for contemplation. Eventually, the mind reaches a stage when it is fully mindful of both happiness and suffering. That's when it will be able to lay aside the happiness and the suffering, the pleasure and the sadness, and lay aside all that is the world and so become the 'knower of the worlds.' Once the mind -

'the one who knows' - can let go, it will settle down at that point.

It is here that the practice becomes really interesting. Wherever there is attachment in the mind, you keep hitting at that point, without letting up. If there is attachment to happiness, you keep pounding at it, not letting the mind get carried away with the mood. If the mind attaches to suffering, you grab hold of that, really getting to grips with it and contemplating it straight away. Even if the mind is caught in an unwholesome mental state, you know it as unwholesome and the mind is not heedless. It's like stepping on thorns: of course, you don't seek to step on thorns, you try to avoid them, but nevertheless sometimes you step on one. Even though you know this, you are unable to stop stepping on those 'thorns.' The mind still follows various states of happiness and sadness, but doesn't completely indulge in them. You sustain a continuous effort to destroy any attachment in the mind - to destroy and clear all that which is the world from the mind.

Some people want to make the mind peaceful, but don't know what true peace really is. They don't know the peaceful mind! There are two kinds of peacefulness - one is the peace that comes through samādhi, the other is the peace that comes through paññā. The mind that is peaceful through samādhi is still deluded. The peace that comes through the practice of samādhi alone is dependent on the mind being separated from mind-objects. When it's not experiencing any mind-objects, then there is calm, and consequently one attaches to the happiness that comes with that calm. However, whenever there is impingement through the senses, the mind gives in straight away. It's afraid of mind-objects. It's afraid of happiness and suffering; afraid of praise and criticism; afraid of forms, sounds, smells and tastes.

One who is peaceful through samādhi alone is afraid of everything and doesn't want to get involved with anybody or anything on the outside. People practising samādhi in this way just want to stay isolated in a cave somewhere, where they can experience the bliss of samādhi without having to come out. Wherever there is a peaceful place, they sneak off and hide themselves away. This kind of samādhi involves a lot of suffering - they find it difficult to come out of it and be with other people. They don't want to see forms or hear sounds. They don't want to experience anything at all! They have to live in some specially preserved quiet place, where no-one will come and disturb them with conversation. They have to have really peaceful surroundings.

This kind of peacefulness can't do the job. If you have reached the necessary level of calm, then withdraw. The Buddha didn't teach to practise samādhi with delusion. If you are practising like that, then stop. If the mind has achieved calm, then use it as a basis for contemplation. Contemplate the peace of concentration itself and use it to connect the mind with and reflect upon the different mind-objects which it experiences. Contemplate the three characteristics of anicca (impermanence), dukkham (suffering) and anattā (not-self). Reflect upon this entire world. When you have contemplated sufficiently, it is all right to re-establish the calm of samādhi. You can re-enter it through sitting meditation and afterwards, with calm re-established, continue with the contemplation. As you gain knowledge, use it to fight the defilements, to train the mind.

The peace which arises through paññā is distinctive, because when the mind withdraws from the state of calm, the presence of paññā makes it unafraid of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations and ideas. It means that as soon as there is sense contact the mind is immediately aware of the mind-object. As soon as there is sense contact you lay it aside - mindfulness is sharp enough to let go right away. This is the peace that comes through paññā.

When you are practising with the mind in this way, the mind becomes considerably more refined than when you are developing samādhi alone. The mind becomes very powerful, and no longer tries to run away. With such energy you become fearless. In the past you were scared to experience anything, but now you know mind-objects as they are and are no longer afraid. You know your own strength of mind and are unafraid. When you see a form, you contemplate it. When you hear a sound, you contemplate it. You become proficient in the contemplation of mind-objects. Whatever it is, you can let go of it all. You clearly see happiness and let it go. You clearly see suffering and let it go. Wherever you see them, you let them go right there. All mind-objects lose their value and are no longer able to sway you. When these characteristics arise within the mind of the practitioner, it is appropriate to change the name of the practice to vipassanā: clear knowing in accordance with the truth. That's what it's all about - knowledge in accordance with the truth of the way things are. This is peace at the highest level, the peace of vipassanā.

Developing samādhi so that you can just sit there and attach to blissful mental states isn't the true purpose of the practice. You must withdraw from it. The Buddha said that you must fight this war, not just hide out in a trench trying to avoid the enemy's bullets. When it's time to fight, you really have to come out with guns blazing. Eventually you have to come out of that trench. You can't stay sleeping there when it's time to fight. This is the way the practice is. You can't allow your mind to just hide, cringing in the shadows.

I have described a rough outline of the practice. You as the practitioners must avoid getting caught in doubts. Don't doubt about the way of practice. When there is happiness, watch the happiness. When there is suffering, watch the suffering. Having established awareness, make the effort to destroy both of them. Let them go. Cast them aside. Know the object of mind and keep letting it go. Whether you want to do sitting or walking meditation it doesn't matter. If you keep thinking, never mind. The important thing is to sustain moment to moment awareness of the mind. If you are really caught in mental proliferation, then gather it all together, and contemplate it in terms of being one whole, cutting it off right from the start, saying, "All these thoughts, ideas and imaginings of mine are simply thought proliferation and nothing more. It's all anicca, dukkham and anattā. None of it is certain at all." Discard it right there.

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